

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 119099

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: ELAB, MOPS, GR

SUBJECT: PA&E WORK PERMITS

REF: (A) 77 STATE 70234, (B) 77 ATHENS 3140, (C) STATE
108263, (D) GRANT-RATIGAN LETTER 7/20/77

1. EMBASSY WILL RECALL PAST COMMUNICATIONS ON THE PROBLEMS
CAUSED BY FAILURE OF GREEK AUTHORITIES TO ISSUE WORK PER-
MITS TO US NATIONALS SELECTED BY PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND
ENGINEERS (PA&E) FOR EMPLOYMENT UNDER CONTRACTS WITH US
AIR FORCE FOR BASE MAINTENANCE AT HELLENIKON AB AND IRAK-
LION AS (SEE REFS). WE HAD HOPED THAT THE INFORMAL SOLU-
TION REPORTED IN REF D WOULD DISPOSE OF THE MATTER.
UNFORTUNATELY, PA&E'S RECENT EXPERIENCE IN ATTEMPTING
TO FILL A KEY MANNING POSITION (ASST FIRE CHIEF-TECHNICAL
SERVICES) AT IRAKLION INDICATES THAT THIS IS NOT THE CASE.
IN THAT INSTANCE, EVEN THOUGH THE POSITION REQUIRED A US
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SECRET SECURITY CLEARANCE AND EXPERIENCE IN USAF SYSTEMS,
AND THUS HAD TO BE FILLED BY A US NATIONAL, GREEK AUTHORI-
TIES REFUSED TO ISSUE THE WORK PERMIT FOR AN INORDINATE
PERIOD OF TIME ON THE GROUNDS THAT QUALIFIED GREEKS ARE
AVAILABLE FOR THE JOB. A PERMIT WAS FINALLY ISSUED, WE
HAVE BEEN TOLD, BECAUSE THE PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEE IS MARRIED
TO A GREEK NATIONAL.

2. IT WOULD SEEM FROM REF D THAT ANY FURTHER EFFORT TO OBTAIN CIVILIAN COMPONENT STATUS FOR PA&E PERSONNEL BY ISSUANCE OF "GREEN CARDS" IS NOT LIKELY TO SUCCEED. THIS SITUATION, HOWEVER, SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. FAILURE TO FILL AND DELAYS IN FILLING IMPORTANT POSITIONS AT IRAKLION ARE CREATING A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM, WHICH, IF NOT CORRECTED SOON, WILL IMPEDE PERFORMANCE OF THE AIR FORCE MISSION IN GREECE. EMBASSY SHOULD EMPHASIZE TO MFA THE GREAT DIFFICULTIES CREATED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH WORK PERMITS ARE BEING PROCESSED. IF MFA CANNOT ACCEDE TO OUR EARLIER REQUEST FOR ISSUANCE OF "GREEN CARDS" EMBASSY SHOULD MAKE THE FURTHER ARGUMENT THAT UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF PARA 2, ARTICLE XI OF APPENDIX I OF THE 1953 MILITARY FACILITIES AGREEMENT, ALL U.S. NATIONALS EMPLOYED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MILITARY FACILITIES AGREEMENT ARE EXEMPTED FROM THE APPLICATION OF GREEK LABOR LAWS REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY QUALIFY AS MEMBERS OF THE CIVILIAN COMPONENT. CONSEQUENTLY, EVEN IF NOT CONSIDERED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE CIVILIAN COMPONENT, US NATIONAL EMPLOYEES OF PA&E WORKING UNDER US FORCES CONTRACTS SHOULD STILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN WORK PERMITS.

3. EVEN IF WORK PERMIT REQUIREMENT WERE PROPERLY APPLICABLE TO THESE PA&E EMPLOYEES, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT HAS A DUTY TO FACILITATE THE PERFORMANCE OF MISSIONS OF THE US
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FORCES IN GREECE DULY AUTHORIZED BY AGREEMENTS BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS. A CONTINUING PRACTICE OF UNREASONABLE DELAY IN ISSUING WORK PERMITS, FREQUENTLY FOLLOWED BY DENIALS, EVEN IN THE FACE OF UNCONTROVERTED CERTIFICATIONS BY US AUTHORITIES THAT SECURITY AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE POSITION NECESSITATE EMPLOYMENT OF A US NATIONAL, IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE GREEK GOVERNMENT UNDER THESE AGREEMENTS.

4. FYI. BECAUSE OF THE SERIOUS INTERFERENCE WITH THE AIR FORCE MISSION CAUSED BY THE WORK PERMIT PROBLEM, AIR FORCE COMMANDERS IN EUROPE HAVE RECOMMENDED TO HQ USAF THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO CONVERTING BASE MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS AT HELLENIKON AND IRAKLION FROM CONTRACTOR TO IN-HOUSE OPERATION. BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED COSTS AND ADDITIONAL DEMANDS ON SCARCE USAF MANPOWER, THIS COURSE OF ACTION IS NOT FAVORED. NONETHELESS, FAILURE TO SATISFACTORILY RESOLVE THE WORK PERMIT PROBLEM MAY LEAVE USAF NO ALTERNATIVE. IF ADOPTED THIS COURSE OF ACTION COULD MEAN AN INCREASE OF APPROXIMATELY 23 US NATIONAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES (CIVILIAN COMPONENT) AT IRAKLION AND 64 US NATIONAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES (CIVILIAN COMPONENT) AT HELLEN-

IKON. REQUEST EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF THE VIABILITY OF

THIS COURSE OF ACTION.

5. FYI. THE AIR FORCE HAS INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF US NATIONAL CIVILIAN PA&E EMPLOYEES TO A MINIMUM LEVEL OF 51. PA&E CURRENTLY EMPLOYS 87 US NATIONALS. TO AVOID SUBSTANTIAL PERSONNEL TURBULENCE, THE REDUCTION WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED AS THE US NATIONALS ATTRITE FROM NON-CRITICAL POSITIONS, PROVIDED THERE ARE QUALIFIED GREEKS. THE AIR FORCE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT THIS POSITION PROVIDED THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WAIVES ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR WORK PERMITS FOR THE 51 CRITICAL POSITIONS AND ISSUES "GREEN CARDS". THIS, IN EFFECT, WOULD GRADUALLY RESULT
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IN 36 ADDITIONAL LOCAL NATIONAL POSITIONS. REQUEST YOU EVALUATE THIS PROPOSAL AND ADVISE US IF IN EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO RESOLVING WORK PROBLEM TO EXPLORE THIS OPTION WITH GREEKS. END FYI.

6. EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO BRING TO ATTENTION OF MFA SUBSTANCE OF PARAS 2 AND 3 ABOVE, AND REPORT GREEK RESPONSE ASAP. REPLY SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE EMBASSY ASSESSMENT REQUESTED IN PARA 4. VANCE

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